



The Spectacle

From the Office Down the Hall

What's in a Name?

For as little as \$24, you can spend the night at Arlington House—at least at the Arlington House International Hostel and Hotel in Chicago. And while it costs more, if you stay at the Arlington House Bed and Breakfast in Galway, Ireland, you also get a full Irish breakfast complete with black sausage. However, while I suspect George Washington Parke Custis was a sausage fan, I don't think this had much to do with the naming of his new estate which is now officially known as Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial. But talk to any local resident over 40, and you'll find they are still calling Arlington House by its pre-1972 moniker: The Custis-Lee Mansion. So what's in a name?

Custis originally called the Arlington Estate *Mount Washington* after his late “father.” But this became too common (even his sister Eliza had one) and, just before he brought home his new bride, he renamed it Arlington (which was, oddly enough, also the name of an estate he already owned on the Eastern Shore). Arlington, Virginia presumably takes its name from Arlington House, but there are also 22 other states with towns named Arlington and, consequently, “Arlington House” describes vacation rentals, businesses and scenes of joy and disaster around the globe.

Despite any amount of discovery or legislation, names have momentum and are very difficult to change. For example: although it causes much confusion to visitors, our National Park Service office is still located in the Old Administration



Arlington House

Building (OAB), a building named for an Arlington National Cemetery function. Similarly, just such a discovery has recently been made through the planning work on the upcoming rehabilitation project. *There is no “courtyard” at Arlington House.*

The area bound by the rear of Arlington House and the two slave quarters was originally just “the yard” or the “work yard.” It is unclear how the name “courtyard” emerged, but it is not only inaccurate, it also suggests the wrong sort of connotation, especially considering the effect caused by the interloping, but beautiful Deodar cedar. So, from hence forward, we will call that space: the yard (or work yard, if you prefer). Unfortunately, everyone else will probably

persist in calling it the courtyard, just like we keep calling L'Enfant “Pierre,” even though he apparently preferred plain old “Peter.”

Next we can tackle the hard stuff and rename Arlington for Henry Allington who arrived in Virginia in 1652, thus bringing this most ancient British name to the new world. Or perhaps we can just settle for calling the OAB: The Seat of Most Serious National Park Service Endeavor (or SMSNPSE for short).

Kendell Thompson
Site Manager
Arlington House,
The Robert E. Lee Memorial

Area Special Events

March 2-5

Conference, "Ladies & Gentlemen of the 1860s: Clothing and Culture of the Civil War Era," in Harrisonburg, PA. Details: www.genteelarts.com.

March 4

Living history, Winter Encampment on the grounds of the Sutherlin Mansion (Danville Museum) in Danville, VA. 434-793-5644 or www.danvillemuseum.org.

Seminar, "Technology and Advancements in the Civil War," includes talks on balloons, railroads, telegraphy and more, in Farmville, VA. Annual event co-sponsored by the Appomattox National Park and Longwood University. 9 am-4 pm at the Hull Building, Room 132, at Longwood. Free. Directions: www.longwood.edu or call 434-395-2220.

March 5

Lecture, exhibit opening and book signing, "Fields of Honor," based on the book by Louis Manarin covering the Civil War history of Henrico County, Va., near Richmond, VA. 2 pm at the Meadow Farm park visitor center. Free. 804-501-5520.

March 9-12

Battle of Hampton Roads Weekend at the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, VA. Keynote speaker James McPherson with a variety of living history, tours, lectures and much more. 757-591-7739 or www.mariner.org

March 11

Lecture, "CSS Shenandoah and the Final Shot of the Civil War," at the USS Constellation, Pier 1, 301 Pratt St in Baltimore Harbor. Noon. Free with admission. www.constellation.org or 410-539-1797 extension 3.

March 16

Lecture, "Art in the Civil War South," at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, VA. Co-sponsored by the Museum of the Confederacy. Noon. \$5. www.moc.org or 804-649-1861.

March 18

Lecture with slides, "Women's Fashions of the Civil War Era," at Fort Ward Museum in Alexandria, VA. 1 pm. \$6. Reservations suggested. www.fortward.org or 703-838-4848.

Bus tour, "Defending the Peninsula," the 1862 Union advance from Fort Monroe to Dam No. 1. Leaves from Lee Hall Mansion in Newport News, VA. 9 am-4 pm. \$40. www.leehall.org or 757-888-3371.

March 18-19

Smithsonian Study Bus Tour (overnight), "The Civil War's Peninsula Campaign," with Ed Bearss. Bus leaves from the Constitution Avenue entrance of the American History Building on the National Mall in Washington at 7:30 am. \$358 (double occupancy). More info: www.civilwarstudies.org or 204-786-3275.

March 18-19

Reenactment, "The Battle of Big Bethel at Endview Plantation in Newport News, VA. Living history demonstrations and battle each day. 10 am-4 pm. \$7. www.endview.org or 757-887-1862.

Special program commemorating the anniversary of the Battle of Bentonville, at the state battlefield near Four Oaks, NC. Details: 910-594-0789 or www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/bentonvi/bentonvi.htm

March 24-25

Seminar, "Blood on the Canvas: The History of Civil War Art," at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. Presentations include talks, demonstrations and displays relating to Civil War art, photography and sculpture. Living history and a video of "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" also are featured. \$55 (\$65 after March 23) includes all sessions, banquet and Saturday luncheon. One-day admissions are available. 434-592-4031 or email gsaxon@liberty.edu. More info: www.liberty.edu/civilwar.

March 24-26

Civil War Weekend, commemorates the Battle of Scary Creek and the Skirmish at Hurricane Bridge at Valley Park in Hurricane, WV. Crafts, military and civilian demonstrations, tours, wagon rides and more. www.putnamcounty.org/tourism or 304-562-0518.

March 25

Abraham Lincoln Institute Annual Symposium at the National Archives II, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD. Presentations include "Lincoln's Other White House," "Lincoln's Constitution," and "Lincoln's Melancholy." 9 am-5 pm. Free. Registration required. Call 202-572-0769 or email secretary@lincoln-institute.org.

Civil War Relic Show, artifacts, books, prints and more at the Eagle's Lodge, 21 Cool Springs Road, Fredericksburg, VA. \$5.00 9 am-5 pm. 540-372-6709.

Anniversary tours of the First Kernstown Battlefield, south of Winchester, VA. Tours at two different parts of the field are offered. A walking tour of the Prichard-Grim Farm (earlier phase of the battle) is scheduled for 10 am, and the Rose Hill section (later phase) tour begins at 1 pm. The Prichard-Grim farm is open 9 am-noon, Rose Hill open noon-4 pm. Tickets for the tour are \$5 per site. Free for children 12 and under. More info: www.shenandoahmuseum.org.

March 31

Brandy Station Foundation Annual Dinner with special presentations on WHF "Rooney" Lee and Maj. HB McClellan, at the Brandy Station Fire Hall. 6:30 pm. \$20. Reservations suggested. Checks to: BSF, PO Box 165, Brandy Station, VA 22714. www.brandystationfoundation.com.

Significant Historic Events in March

March 1838

On the way to St. Louis to complete an engineering project, the Lees stopped in Baltimore, and Mrs. Lee persuaded her husband to have his portrait painted by American artist William Edward West (1788-1857). As Mrs. Lee felt he should be depicted in full dress uniform, wearing his epaulettes, she had her mother send them by train to Baltimore. Mrs. Lee had her portrait made at the same time. Today the original portraits hang at Washington and Lee University, and copies hang over the mantels in the White Parlor.

March 1855

Robert E. Lee was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the new Second Cavalry raised for service on the frontier.

March 2, 1865

General Lee proposed to General Grant that they meet to discuss “the possibility of arriving at a satisfactory adjustment of the present unhappy difficulties.” Lee received

Grant’s negative reply on March 4. President Lincoln had decided that “no peace terms would be discussed with the states in rebellion until Confederate forces laid down their arms: the South must surrender first.”

March 4, 1925

Congress approved legislation authorizing the restoration of Arlington House as the ‘Lee Mansion National Memorial.’ It was believed that this Congressional action “would be tangible recognition by the country, North and South, that the bitterness of other days is entirely gone.” The Secretary of War was ordered to restore the house “as nearly as may be practicable ... to the condition in which it existed immediately prior to the Civil War.”

March 4, 1929

Four years after Congress authorized the creation of the “Lee Mansion National Memorial,’ the first significant appropriation of \$90, 000 to restore and furnish Arlington House was approved by the War Department.

March 5, 1798

George Washington wrote a frank assessment of the character of his ward, GWP Custis, for the head of St. John’s College in Annapolis, where Custis had been enrolled in February after his expulsion from the College of New Jersey (Princeton). Washington wrote that Custis possessed “competent talents to fit him for any studies, but they are counteracted by an indolence of mind which renders it difficult to draw them into action.”

March 11, 1824

Robert E. Lee was appointed to West Point by President James Monroe, but “owing to the long list of applicants, he could not be admitted until July 1, 1825.”

March 12, 1850

G. W. Custis Lee was appointed to West Point by President Zachary Taylor.

March 16, 1861

Robert E. Lee was commissioned a full Colonel in the United States Army and given command of the 1st Cavalry Regiment. Abraham Lincoln signed the commission, and Lee did not hesitate to accept it when it was forwarded to him on March 28.

March 22, 1932

Not yet fully furnished, Arlington House was opened to the public as a historic house museum.

March 25, 1818

Henry ‘Lighthorse Harry’ Lee died at “Dungeness,” the estate of General Nathaniel Greene’s daughter on Cumberland Island, Georgia. Henry Lee was enroute home to Virginia from Barbados where he had tried to regain his health and escape his creditors. He was buried in the Greene family cemetery on Cumberland Island, his remains now rest in the Lee crypt at Lexington.

March 29, 1836

GWP Custis was reappointed Justice of the Peace for Alexandra County by President Andrew Jackson, having first been appointed in 1818 by President James Madison.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House was the home of Robert E. Lee and his family for thirty years and is uniquely associated with the Washington and Custis families. It is now preserved as a memorial to General Lee, who gained the respect of Americans in both the North and the South.

Arlington House

The Robert E. Lee Memorial

c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

Phone

703-235-1530

Web Site

<http://www.nps.gov/arho>

The Spectacle online

<http://www.nps.gov/arho/tour/spectacle.html>

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Please contact Delphine Gross no later than the 20th of each month with availability dates and times to be posted the following month (Please call by March 20th with April information). Even if you are a regularly scheduled VIP please contact Delphine to confirm your availability. Again, the contact number is (703) 235-1530 ext. 227. Please leave the dates and times you are available on the voice mail. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

History Happenings

Remember the Ladies . . .

Have you ever stopped to consider what the typical visitor to Arlington House learns? Most will come to understand the Washington-Custis-Lee relationship, the reasons behind Robert E. Lee's decision to resign, and the forces that led to the creation of the cemetery. Yet many will leave the house without learning much about the women of Arlington.

With Women's History Month upon us, we have a timely opportunity to improve visitors' understanding of the role women played at Arlington. Just as Black History Month gives us a chance to better interpret that aspect of Arlington's history, the month of March allows for greater emphasis on the women of the household. We can increase our interpretation of women's history in two ways: thematically and by room.

Of paramount concern to the ladies of the house were matters of religion and the education of the Arlington slaves. These two themes can easily be interpreted by mentioning the practice of daily prayers in the parlor, a practice begun by Mrs. Custis and later carried out by Mrs. Lee and Markie Williams. Family members and the house slaves were expected to attend. Annie Lee and her sisters used the playroom/dressing room for Sunday school for the slave children. The women also employed the schoolroom for the instruction of the slaves. According to Jim Parks, classes took place three times each week. It was probably Mrs. Custis who suggested that the plantation schoolhouse (for which no teacher could be found) be converted to a chapel for the use of all those who lived at Arlington. When Mrs. Custis died in her bedchamber in 1853, she was reciting the Lord's Prayer with Annie and Agnes. Six of the Arlington slaves served as her pallbearers.

The ladies of the family also enjoyed several pastimes. Gardening was a favorite endeavor. Mrs. Custis oversaw the development of the

flower garden. During the growing season, visitors were treated to fresh bouquets gathered from the garden. Slaves often sold bouquets in the markets of Washington to raise funds for the American Colonization Society. During the cold season, the women used the conservatory to grow flowers and plants for the approaching spring. Annice and Ada Gray, the daughters of Selina and Thornton, remembered stringing blossoms together into necklaces while Mrs. Lee sat reading in the arbor. The Lees girls often retreated to the garden to read the novels of which their father disapproved. After the death of Mrs. Custis, the garden became a place for spiritual reflection. Agnes Lee observed that she felt especially close to her grandmother when she walked in the flower garden, which she treasured all the more after Mrs. Custis' death. Each of the Lee girls received a small plot in the garden in which to grow her favorite flowers.

Art and music were also popular with the ladies of Arlington. Mrs. Lee was a talented painter, and two of her original paintings can be seen in the morning room. She also produced numerous whimsical sketches including several of cats and dogs. In 1861, Mrs. Lee was coloring a portrait of Rob. Jr. in the morning room when learned that the U.S. Army would soon take over the estate. Agnes and Annie (and probably their two sisters) studied art while away at boarding school. Each of the Lee girls was expected to

be accomplished on the piano. Annie and Agnes performed in a recital at their school in Staunton, Virginia. Markie and Agnes once played and sang for an Episcopala bishop who visited the house. Mildred received music lessons from at least two different instructors at Arlington. On Sunday mornings, the girls taught hymns to the slave children in the dressing room/play room.

These are many opportunities to emphasize the roles and achievements of the ladies of Arlington. Since no formal programs have been planned, please try to incorporate an extra story or two about the women of the estate as you talk to visitors this month and throughout the year.



Construction Project and Collection Move Update

Packing of the museum collection has started. Laura is moving books out of the secretaries in the exhibit rooms, so you should not notice anything "missing" from the rooms. Kathryn Blackwell, Catholic University Library/Special Collections intern, is inventorying and cleaning the books, updating the catalogue records and packing them for storage.

There is a little work left to do on the 100% inventory of the museum collection. This must be done before the collection is packed in order to set a baseline inventory. Everything is tracked and will be inventoried when it returns to the house.

Again, we will do our best to keep you up to date with this project.

March 2006

Arlington House VIP Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Elizabeth Pryor 9:00-12:30 Matt Abney 9:30-1:30	2 Walter DeGroot 9:30-11:30 C. Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	3 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	4 Russell Simonaro 10:00-1:00 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00 Bryant Davis 10:30-12:30 Hope Flanagan 1:00-4:00
5 Elene Paul 11:00-3:00 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30 Andrew Strait 1:30-4:00	6 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	7 Kathie Lipovac 12:30-4:30 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 12:00-4:00	8	9 Walter DeGroot 9:30-11:30 C. Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	10 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	11 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00
12 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30	13 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	14 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 12:00-4:00	15	16 Walter DeGroot 9:30-11:30 C. Needham 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	17 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	18 Elene Paul 10:00-3:00 Russell Simonaro 10:00-1:00 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00 Bryant Davis 10:30-12:30
19 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30	20 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	21 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	22	23 Walter DeGroot 9:30-11:30 C. Needham and Elaine Street 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	24 Joan Cashell 9:30-11:30	25 Aaron LaRocca 10:00-3:00 Vanna Lewis 10:00-4:30 Hope Flanagan 1:00-4:00
26 Jim Pearson 12:30-4:30 Andrew Strait 1:30-4:00	27 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00	28 Fred Hoffman 1:00-4:00 Aaron LaRocca 12:00-4:00	29	30 Walter DeGroot 9:30-11:30 C. Needham 10:30-1:00 Gene Cross 11:00-4:30 Aaron LaRocca 1:00-4:00	31	



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Arlington House
The Robert E. Lee Memorial
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

<<Name>>
<<Address>>
<<CityStateZip>>

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The Spectacle is a monthly newsletter for the volunteers of Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.

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Comments? Write to:

Kendell Thompson, Site Manager
Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial
c/o George Washington Memorial Parkway
Turkey Run Park
McLean, VA 22101

Volunteers Needed

The roster of active volunteers is in dire need of additional names! If you know anyone interested in joining our ranks please refer them to Delphine Gross, Volunteer Coordinator (703) 235-1530 ext 227.

